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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Sixty-eighth session

Summary record of the 1530th meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 23 October 2017, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Leinarte

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Chair** declared open the sixty-eighth session of the Committee.

Statement by the representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

2. **Ms. Edelenbos** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)), noting that the number of communications registered by the Committee had continued to increase, said that 13 new communications had been registered in 2016 and that, during the current session, decisions would be reached on 3 of the 45 pending cases. The Committee had adopted a number of landmark decisions that had raised the profile of the individual communications procedure and shed light on a wide range of areas in which women faced discrimination.

3. In July, in collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, the Committee had adopted its general recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19. The Committee had also adopted Views in a case involving femicide in which it had issued strong recommendations on the obligation to investigate, prosecute and punish the perpetrators in that and similar cases. The general recommendation provided a powerful legal tool with which to tackle gender-based violence and made clear that State responsibility extended to acts and omissions by non-State actors.

4. On 15 September 2017, the Human Rights Council had held its annual discussion on the integration of a gender perspective into its work and human rights mechanisms. In his opening statement, the High Commissioner for Human Rights had stated that many women and girls continued to be deprived of equal opportunities and access to resources and many regions around the world faced a backlash against the advancement of women's rights. The High Commissioner had emphasized that the ongoing reform of the United Nations development system would encourage United Nations country teams to follow up and assist the implementation of recommendations made by human rights mechanisms, including the treaty bodies, within the context of their development programming.

5. The Council had also adopted resolution 36/8 on the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls and the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In accordance with the resolution, OHCHR was requested to organize, in collaboration with Member States, UN-Women, the United Nations Population Fund and other bodies, a two-day intersessional expert meeting on the human rights of women and girls and mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to prepare a report on the outcome of the meeting, to be presented to the Council at its thirty-ninth session.

6. On 25 September 2017, the Council had held a panel discussion on the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination on women and girls. Ms. Gbedemah had participated in the discussion as a panellist and informed the panel of the Committee's work in assessing the impact of such discrimination.

7. The Council had appointed four new members of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice. It had adopted resolution 36/17 on the question of the death penalty, in which it had referred to the Committee's general recommendation No. 35 and urged States to ensure that the death penalty was not imposed as a sanction for specific forms of conduct such as adultery and same-sex relations.

8. In order to promote the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Committee had taken steps to review its reporting guidelines, encourage systematic reporting by States parties on the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal targets, use its expertise to shape the methodologies employed in the selection of Goal indicators and influence global and national policy-making through its substantive submissions to the high-level political forums on sustainable development in 2016 and 2017. Through those efforts, the

Committee had highlighted the inextricable link between women's human rights and the 2030 Agenda.

9. On 6 July 2017, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 71/313 on the work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, establishing the global indicator framework for the Goals. The list of Sustainable Development Goal indicators included conflict-related deaths, killing and other forms of violence against human rights defenders and the existence of independent national human rights institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles.

10. **Ms. Acar** said that the development of general recommendation No. 35 provided a genuine example of the cross-fertilization that took place between regional and international standard-setting instruments. For example, the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), which was based on the Committee's general recommendation No. 19, was now considered to be the most advanced legally binding instrument on violence against women. In turn, the Committee's general recommendation No. 35 had incorporated key parts of the Convention in order to update general recommendation No. 19 without abandoning its main arguments.

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (CEDAW/C/68/1)

11. *The agenda was adopted.*

Report of the Chair on activities undertaken between the sixty-seventh and sixty-eighth sessions of the Committee

12. **The Chair** said that, since the previous session, the number of States parties that had ratified or acceded to the Convention had remained at 189. The number of States parties that had accepted the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the Committee's meeting time had remained at 71. In accordance with the Convention, a total of 126 States parties were required to accept the amendment in order to bring it into a force. The number of States parties to the Optional Protocol had remained at 109. Since the start of the previous session, four States parties had submitted their periodic reports and one State party had submitted combined reports under the simplified reporting procedure.

13. On 25 August 2017, she had attended a day of general discussion on equality and non-discrimination, organized by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, where she had participated in a panel discussion on reasonable accommodation, special measures and accessibility. On 11 September 2017, she had participated in a panel discussion on equal pay and the future of work hosted by the Government of New South Wales at the University of Sydney. On 21 September 2017, she had attended another panel discussion entitled "Right down to the roots — what does it take to prevent violence against women?" at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting organized by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. On 5 October 2017, she had presented the report of the Committee on its sixty-fourth, sixty-fifth and sixty-sixth sessions (A/72/38) to the Third Committee and engaged in an interactive dialogue with Member States. Her statement before the Third Committee had focused on the efforts of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to enhance the impact of the Sustainable Development Goals, its work on gender-based violence against women and the treaty-body strengthening process.

14. **Ms. Ameline** said that she wished to draw attention to a pilot project, entitled "Egyptian Women: Pioneers of the Future", under which sustainable job opportunities were created for young women. The project, which would be extended to other Mediterranean countries, was intended to strengthen equality in the workplace by bringing together stakeholders from Government, civil society, the private sector and the United Nations. It served as an example of the need to ensure that the Sustainable Development Goals were fully integrated into the work of the Committee.

15. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that, since the previous session, she had represented the Committee at an event on compliance with reporting obligations to international human

rights treaty bodies, held in Chiang Mai, Thailand. From 8 to 10 September 2017, she had given a presentation on the Committee and the Optional Protocol to an audience of parliamentarians in Tanzania. From 16 to 21 September, she had given a presentation to parliamentarians in Namibia on reporting to treaty bodies. On 25 September 2017, in Geneva, she had participated in a panel discussion on the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and violence against women in the context of racism. Lastly, on 16 October 2017, she had given a presentation on the Committee's draft general recommendation on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction and climate change to a diverse group of stakeholders at Utrecht University in the Netherlands.

16. **Ms. Gabr** said that, in her role as the chair of an interministerial committee on the fight against trafficking in persons and clandestine and illegal migration, she had worked on a voluntary basis to help prevent women, particularly in poor villages, from being exploited. She had participated in a workshop organized by the Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue in which she had discussed women's rights in the Arab region and given a presentation in Arabic. She had also taken part in a panel discussion, organized by the League of Arab States, on the implementation of article 9 of the Convention in the Arab region and the decision by the Governments of Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt to withdraw their reservations to that article. In addition, she had attended the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

17. **Ms. Chalal** said that she had been invited by OHCHR to lead a round-table discussion on the draft general recommendation on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction and climate change. She had also participated in a meeting of the Arab Network for National Human Rights Institutions.

18. **Ms. Haidar** said that, in August 2017, she had participated in an event organized by OHCHR for women human rights defenders from the Middle East and North Africa and in a panel discussion held as a side event of the Human Rights Council on addressing and preventing gender-based violence. She had given a presentation on the Committee's work on the gender related dimensions of climate change at an event organized by the Regional Coordination Mechanism for the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia in Beirut.

19. **Ms. Schulz** said that, on 31 August 2017, she had given a lecture on the work of the Committee for a course entitled human rights, gender and alterity offered by the University of Geneva and Graduate Institute summer school. In addition, she had finished drafting comments on four articles of the Convention and two articles of the Optional Protocol for a legal commentary that was expected to be published in 2018.

20. **Ms. Verges** said that she had participated in a televised debate on the role of United Nations experts that had offered an opportunity to highlight the work carried out by the Committee and assess the extent to which the Convention had been implemented in Mauritania. She had supervised the dissemination of a publication on violence against women in the workplace that she had produced in 2016. She had been asked to draft a paper on socioeconomic indicators for women as part of the preparations for the festivities to mark the independence of Mauritania.

21. **Ms. Rana** said that, in August 2017, she had been the keynote speaker at a conference on women's shelters, where she had given a presentation on the provisions of human rights mechanisms relating to that subject. In September 2017, in New York, she had attended a special meeting hosted by the Permanent Missions of Switzerland and Canada to the United Nations that aimed to explore ways in which those Missions could work with the Committee, the Security Council and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. In the same month, in Myanmar, she had run a three-day workshop on developing a national action plan on women and peace and security. In October 2017, at a workshop on gender responsive education organized by the Governments of several south Asian countries, she had given a presentation on advocacy strategies for enforcing international commitments at the national level. In the same month she had attended a workshop on human rights litigation, where she had given a presentation on the individual complaints procedure.

22. **Ms. Nadaraia** said that, in September 2017, she had participated in a conference on gender mainstreaming and the promotion of policies aimed at eliminating femicide and violence against women for Eastern Partnership countries.

23. **Ms. Acar** said that, acting in her capacity as President of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, she had engaged in an exchange of views with the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 27 September 2017 in which she had highlighted the links between the work of the Committee and the Istanbul Convention and presented the Group's first two reports evaluating the status of implementation of the Istanbul Convention, by Austria and Monaco, respectively. In view of the fact that a delegation from Monaco was due to appear before the Committee during the current session, it was worth noting that the Group's extensive baseline evaluation report on that country was available on its website.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention

24. **Ms. Gabr** said that the pre-sessional working group for the sixty-eighth session, which had met from 6 to 10 March 2017 in Geneva, had prepared lists of issues and questions relating to the reports of Burkina Faso, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Guatemala, Kenya, Kuwait, Monaco, Nauru, Norway, Oman, Paraguay and Singapore. The Committee had also prepared, on a pilot basis, a list of issues prior to the submission of the fifth periodic report of Lichtenstein under its optional simplified reporting procedure. To assist in the preparation of the lists of issues and questions, the working group had referred to the reports of all the State parties listed above except that of Lichtenstein, and the core documents of all those States parties except those of Nauru and Singapore. The Committee had also referred to its general recommendations, background information and draft lists of issues and questions prepared by the secretariat, and other pertinent information, including concluding observations issued by the Committee and other treaty bodies. In preparing the list of issues and questions, the working group had paid particular attention to the States parties' follow-up to the Committee's concluding observations on their previous reports. The working group had benefited from written and oral information submitted by entities and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and national human rights institutions. The list of issues and questions adopted by the working group had been transmitted to the States parties concerned.

Follow-up to the consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention

25. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that, acting in her capacity as rapporteur on follow-up, she had met with representatives of Benin, Cabo Verde and Sierra Leone, whose responses had been positive. At the end of the sixty-seventh session, follow-up letters outlining the outcome of assessments of follow-up reports had been sent to Belgium, China, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Oman, Solomon Islands and Swaziland. First reminders regarding overdue follow-up reports had been sent to Azerbaijan, Eritrea, Gabon, Kazakhstan, Maldives and Tuvalu while second reminders had been sent to Ghana, Guinea, Mauritania and Poland.

26. The Committee had received follow-up reports from Benin with a 23-month delay, Brunei Darussalam with a 9-month delay and Slovenia and Spain with no delay. She invited the country rapporteurs for Benin, Slovenia and Spain to assist with the assessment of follow-up reports issued by those States parties. She also called for a volunteer to assist with the assessment of the follow-up report received from Brunei Darussalam.

27. During the current session, first reminders regarding the submission of follow-up reports should be sent to Croatia, the Gambia, Namibia, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal and Viet Nam and second reminders should be sent to Azerbaijan, Eritrea, Gabon, Kyrgyzstan and Tuvalu. Furthermore, meetings should be scheduled with representatives of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Cabo Verde, the Central African Republic, the Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Guinea, India, Mauritania, Poland, Sierra Leone and Uganda.

Solemn declaration by new and re-elected members of the Committee

28. *Ms. Narain made the solemn declaration provided for in rule 15 of the Committee's rules of procedure.*

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.